

Otterbein University

Digital Commons @ Otterbein

Integrative Studies Symposium

Conferences, Events & Lectures

3-14-2017

What If I Told You?

Shyla Cummings

Otterbein University, shyla.cummings@otterbein.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/is>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), and the [Digital Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cummings, Shyla, "What If I Told You?" (2017). *Integrative Studies Symposium*. 3.
<https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/is/3>

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences, Events & Lectures at Digital Commons @ Otterbein. It has been accepted for inclusion in Integrative Studies Symposium by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Otterbein. For more information, please contact digitalcommons07@otterbein.edu.

What if I told you?

My ex of two years was white
I love camping
One summer night, I pulled over to feed a stray dog spaghetti
If I could I'd live on a farm
And from time to time I listen to country music

What would you say about me? What would your thoughts be? What if I added?

I barely use slang
I hang out with people outside my race

What would you guess the color of my skin is? What are your thoughts now? Maybe there nice, maybe they're rude, but you feel like your opinion is right. All the above are true about me, but people aren't always accepting of that! I grew up in a predominantly white school, I was the only black kid in my grade. I never felt different or out of place until third grade, I moved to a more diverse school. I would try to interact with black kids but in conversation they would be making fun of me.

Shyla you're whiter than so and so
Shyla you're an Oreo (white on the inside, black on the outside)
Shyla you talk like a white girl

After so much taunting I drew back who I was. I became very timid of being myself around anyone, I didn't know where I belonged, who I had permission to be. To my peers, I wasn't playing the part society directed a black girl should be. The years went on, by high school the jokes faded. I knew my classmates since third grade, eventually they accepted who I was. It wasn't until senior year when I started dating a white guy the comments slowly crept back. For example, there was a time when I went to the mall with a group of friends. A white guy walked by, my friend (who was black) pointed out how cute he was, I agreed. She then said, "Shyla of course you agree". I stayed silent but in my head I was thinking, what's wrong with me agreeing, she's black and she thinks so too. We shortly went into another store and I then commented on how the black worker was extremely attractive. One of my friends then sarcastically gasped, what the white girl thinks black boys are attractive. I then had to say something I told them: I have only seriously dated one white. I DO NOT HAVE A PREFERENCE. *dramatic pause here* No one said anything. In the silence I thought to myself, why do I have to keep justifying myself.

Martin Luther King said, "I look to a day when people will not be judge by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." I wish I could say these conversations didn't happen when I got to college but they did, towards all races. I know people aren't meaning to offend me and hurt my feelings, but they are. Words can sometimes punch you harder than someone's

fist ever will. We shouldn't define people by the color of their skin. We should define them by their:

Heart

Who they are, not what they are

Character

When you take away your eye sight the character of a person is still their. Just because you can't see the person that doesn't change who they are.

COLOR DOESN'T HAVE A CHARACTER PEOPLE DO!